

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 ACDA-12 AID-05 TRSE-00

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6152

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI POUCH

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 4482

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINR, PBOR, MOPS, SU, ET

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN OFFICERS DEFECT TO SUDAN

SUMMARY: SIXTEEN FORMER ETHIOPIAN MILITARY OFFICERS WHO HAVE DEFECTED ARE NOW IN KHARTOUM AS REFUGEES. SUDANGOV ASSISTS THEM MINIMALLY TO RESOLVE OWN PROBLEMS AND DOES NOT MUCH EXPLOIT DEFECTIONS FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES. ERITREANS TREATED OFFICERS WELL AND SUDANESE AUTHORITIES CONDUCT DEBRIEFING BEFORE BRINGING THEM TO KHARTOUM, WEEKS OR MONTHS AFTER DEFECTION. OFFICERS HAVE LITTEL FRESH MILITARY DATA, BUT REPORT POOR DISCIPLINE AND MORALE IN ETHIOPIAN ARMY BECAUSE OF LEFTWING POLITICALIZATION OF TROOPS VS. OFFICERS. DESPITE SERIOUS PROBLEMS, OFFICERS
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BELIEVE ETHIOPIAN ARMY IS SUPERIOR TO ENEMIES. ERITREANS, FOR EXAMPLE, WILL NOT TAKE MASSAWA. CONCERNING POLITICAL FUTURE OF ADDIS REGIME, OFFICERS BELIEVE ONLY RADICALS ARE COMPETING FOR MENGISTU'S PLACE. CONSERVATIVES AND NATIONALISTS ARE SECRETLY BIDDING TIME. SOVIET INFLUENCE WILL THWART ANY SHIFT TO RIGHT IN NEAR FUTURE SO OFFICERS ARE PESSIMISTIC. END SUMMARY.

2. SIXTEEN FORMER ETHIOPIAN MILITARY OFFICERS ARE NOW IN KHARTOUM WITH REFUGEE STATUS SIMILAR TO THAT ACCORDED 150,000 ERITREAN AND ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES IN CAMPS IN SUDAN, EXCEPT THAT OFFICERS LIVE ON LOCAL ECONOMY. OCCASIONAL PUBLICITY IS GIVEN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP DEFECTIONS BUT NO CONCERTED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN MADE BY SUDANGOV. NUMBER OF DEFECTING OFFICERS TEMPORARILY IN KHARTOUM HAS RISEN SLOWLY IN RECENT MONTHS APPARENTLY REFLECTING GROWING PESSIMISM AMONG ETHIOPIA MILITARY ABOUT FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS.

2. OFFICERS REPORT THAT ELF AND EPLF TREATED THEM COURTEOUSLY DURING WEEKS OR MONTHS IT TOOK TO TRAVEL FROM ETHIOPIAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY TO SUDAN. TWO OFFICERS WHO VISITED EMBASSY RECENTLY DEFECTED FROM ASMARA IN LATE SEPTEMBER. UPON ARRIVAL IN SUDAN, OFFICERS ARE DEBRIEFED BY SUDANESE AUTHORITIES AT POSTS NEAR KASSALA OR TOKAR, USING PRINTED QUESTIONNAIRES, AND THEN SENT TO KHARTOUM. HERE THEY ARE ON OWN RESOURCES EXCEPT FOR PAYMENT FOR FOOD AND LODGING. APPARENTLY OFFICERS ARE ABLE TO USE TRAINING AND EDUCATION TO INTEGRATE THEMSELVES INTO LOCAL SUDANESE OR FOREIGN COMMUNITIES IN CIVILIAN CAPACITIES.

3. OFFICERS HAVE LITTLE MILITARY DATA OF RECENT VINTAGE. THEY REPORT THAT MILITARY DISCIPLINE IN ETHIOPIAN ARMY HAS BEEN RUINED BY CADRES, SELECTED FROM WORST MISFITS AND DISCIPLINE
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PROBLEMS IN BATTALION. AFTER TWO WEEKS' POLITICAL TRAINING, CADRES RETURN TO UNITS TO HARANGUE MEN ON CLASS WAR AND DISTRUST OF OFFICERS. SOLDIERS ARE TOLD NOT TO OBEY ORDERS UNLESS THEY APPROVE THEM BECAUSE OF TREACHERY OF ALL OFFICERS. OFFICERS ARE SEPARATELY LECTURED ON MILITARY FAILURES ATTRIBUTED TO THEM AND ON LACK OF DISCIPLINE. SINCE SOLDIERS ARE TOLD THEY MAY SHOOT OFFICERS WHOSE LOYALTY AND LEADERSHIP THEY SUSPECT, FEW OFFICERS FOLLOW UP WHEN ORDERS ARE NOT OBEYED IN ABOUT HALF OF ALL CASES. OFFICERS ARE AFRAID TO DISCUSS POLITICAL/MILITARY PROBLEMS AMONG THEMSELVES FOR FEAR OF SUMMARY EXECUTION. NONE OF SIXTEEN DEFECTEES IN KHARTOUM CONFIDED IN ANYONE BEFORE MAKING BREAK, ALTHOUGH SOME KNEW EACH OTHER.

4. ON OTHER HAND, OFFICERS BELIEVE ETHIOPIAN ARMY STILL SUPERIOR TO ENEMIES. SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS AGREE ON NEED FOR VICTORY IN COMBAT. ERITREANS TEND TO USE HUMAN WAVE TACTICS WHICH ARE SUCCESSFUL AGAINST ISOLATED AND SMALL GARRISONS BUT WHICH WILL BE BLOODBATH AGAINST LARGER UNITS. NAVAL LIEUTENANT PREDICTED STALEMATE AT MASSAWA BECAUSE CLEAR FIELDS OF FIRE CLOSE TO TOWN WILL PREVENT ERITREANS FROM CLOSING WITH GARRISON.

5. CONCERNING POLITICAL FUTURE OF ETHIOPIA, OFFICERS BELIEVE RADICALS ARE FIGHTING AMONG THEMSELVES. REAL CONSERVATIVES ARE CONCEALING THEMSELVES UNTIL VICIOUS POWER STRUGGLE AMONG LEFTISTS BURNS ITSELF OUT. "THEY HAVE NOT CAUGHT ANY CONSERVATIVES YET", SAID ONE OFFICER, WHO ADDED THAT PRESENCE OF SOVIETS GREATLY COMPLICATES AND PROBABLY WILL PREVENT SHIFT TO RIGHT IN NEAR FUTURE. ETHIOPIAN NATIONALISM CANNOT REASSERT ITSELF IN FACE OF EVER-PRESENT SPIES. MENGISTU'S MAJOR THREAT NOW IS FROM OTHER RADICALS WHO WILL CONTINUE SIMILAR LEFIST POLICIES IF THEY GET POWER.

6. OFFICERS CONFIRM OTHER REPORTS ABOUT ETHIOPIAN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS AND WEAPONS. MILITIA LACK HEAVY WEAPONS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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TRAINING. SOVIET EQUIPMENT IS NOT PREFERRED TO AMERICAN, ALTHOUGH ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE IS REPORTEDLY ABLE TO GET NINETY MINUTES FLYING TIME FROM MIG-21, TWICE AS MUCH AS SOMALI AIR FORCE COULD GET. OFFICERS DO NOT LACK CONFIDENCE IN EVENTUAL ETHIOPIAN VICTORY OVER ENEMIES, EVEN AFTER EXTENSIVE TOURS BEHIND ERITREAN LINES, BUT THEY DEFECTED BECAUSE OF THREAT TO PERSONAL SAFETY AND INCREASING DESPAIR ABOUT INTERNAL ETHIOPIAN POLITICS. BERGUS

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